

Message Text

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FOR CARTER FROM PA

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JAMES RESTON OP ED COLUMN NEW YORK
TIMES FRIDAY, MAY 13 HEADED "THE POLICY OF CONFUSION."

2. IN HIS CLASSIC STUDY OF DIPLOMACY, HAROLD NICOLSON
WARNED OF "THE DANGERS OF IMPRECISION," OF "CONFUSION OF
THOUGHT" LEADING TO "ANXIOUS BEWILDERMENT," OF THE
NARCOTIC FORCE OF ILL-CONSIDERED SLOGANS," AND OF "THE
MORE GUILFUL ASPECTS OF TACT."

3. WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE, HERE IN WASHINGTON, OF ONE MORE
CHAPTER OF UNITED STATES DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN
WHICH ALL THESE WARNINGS ARE BEING IGNORED. EVEN ALLOWING
FOR THE MYSTIFYING COMPLEXITY OF PRESERVING A SECURE
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ISRAEL AND AT THE SAME TIME ASSURING ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES
OF OIL FROM THE ARAB STATES, IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND
THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S HANDLING OF THIS DILEMMA.

4. RECENTLY, IT HAS BEEN A MASTERPIECE OF IMPRECISION--
CONVEYED BY A SERIES OF TELEVISION SHOTS: PRESIDENT CARTER
TALKING VAGUELY AT A TOWN MEETING IN NEW ENGLAND ABOUT

A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND;" SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE STANDING WITH THE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE LOBBY OF THE U.S. EMBASSY IN LONDON PROMISING TO SHIP "ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY" TO ISRAEL; JIMMY CARTER PROCLAIMING IN GENEVA HIS AMIABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA AND THEN, BACK IN WASHINGTON, UNDERSCORING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE WASHINGTON'S "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH ISRAEL.

5. AT LEAST ONE THING IS CLEAR ABOUT THIS COMPLICATED PROCEDURE: NOBODY QUITE KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS, AND EVERYBODY IS VAGUELY SUSPICIOUS. WHEN MR. CARTER EXCHANGES AMIABLE COMPLIMENTS WITH THE PRESIDENT OF SYRIA, OR TALKS ABOUT TRYING TO LIMIT THE FLOW OF AMERICAN ARMS ABROAD, THE PRO-ISRAELI CONGRESSMEN CALL ON HIM AT THE WHITE HOUSE FOR REASSURANCES THAT ISRAEL'S FLOW OF ARMS AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND MONEY WILL NOT BE AFFECTED.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, WHEN SECRETARY VANCE PROMISES THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL CONTINUE TO GET THE MILITARY ARMS AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY THEY NEED, PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA, PRESIDENT SADAT OF EGYPT AND THE OTHER ARAB LEADERS WONDER WHAT'S GOING ON.

7. MAYBE WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN IS THAT THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES ALSO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. IT HAS DEALT WITH THE MIDDLE EAST CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE ARABS LONG ENOUGH TO UNCLASSIFIED

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UNDERSTAND THE USES OF CONFUSION. AND IT WATCHES, WITH A MIXTURE OF ADMIRATION AND DOUBT, JIMMY CARTER'S EFFORTS TO REASSURE THE ISRAELIS WHILE TRYING TO GET THEM BACK TO THE PRE-1967 BORDERS WITH A NEW PALESTINIAN "HOMELAND" ON THEIR FLANK.

8. WHAT THE CONGRESS IS CONSTANTLY AWARE OF, HOWEVER, AND HAS BEEN FOR A VERY LONG TIME, IS THE POWER OF THE PRO-ISRAELI LOBBY IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE, AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY ON THE POLITICS AND POLICIES OF CAPITOL HILL, AND IT IS WATCHING VERY CAREFULLY HOW THE NEW PRESIDENT WILL REACT TO THESE PRESSURES.

9. MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS WHO FAVOR HAROLD NICOLSON'S PRINCIPLE OF PRECISION ASK, IF WE HAVE A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH ISRAEL, AND ITS SECURITY IS A VITAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES, WHY DON'T WE MAKE THIS

CLEAR AND COMMIT THE UNITED STATES BY TREATY TO THE DEFENSE OF ISRAEL WITHIN ITS PRE-1967 BOUNDARIES?

10. THEN, ACCORDING TO THIS CLEAR COMMITMENT, THE CONGRESS, THE ISRAELIS, THE ARAB STATES AND THE SOVIETS WOULD KNOW THAT THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND PRE1967 TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES OF ISRAEL WOULD BE GUARANTEED BY WASHINGTON, AND COULD NOT BE VIOLATED WITHOUT RISKING WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES.

11. BUT, ODDLY, NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT IN JERUSALEM, NOR IN WASHINGTON, NOR THE CONGRESS, NOR THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT, WANT THIS SORT OF CLARITY AND COMMITMENT.

12. "THERE IS A TENDENCY OF ALL DEMOCRACIES," NICOLSON WROTE, "TO PREFER A VAGUE AND COMFORTING FORMULA TO A PRECISE AND BINDING DEFINITION. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY UNCLASSIFIED

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DIPLOMACY IS DEPENDENT UPON THE MOUNT OF CONVICTION OR CERTAINTY THAT IT INSPIRES. . . . THUS IT OFTEN OCCURS THAT DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS, BY COUCHING THEIR STATEMENTS OF POLICY IN VAGUE OR AMBIGUOUS LANGUAGE, INVITE THE VERY DANGERS WHICH THEY WISH TO PREVENT."

13. THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT OF A DIVIDED ISRAEL NOW SEEM TO BE DOING. THEY ARE INVITING IMPRECISION, AND NOT BY ACCIDENT. MR. CARTER MAY BE IMPRECISE, BUT HE KNOWS PRECISELY WHAT HE'S DOING: HE'S PROMISING ISRAEL ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND WASHINGTON'S "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP," BOTH UNDEFINED, WHILE SUPPORTING A "HOMELAND" FOR THE PALESTINIANS IN RETURN FOR THEIR PROMISE TO RECOGNIZE THE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND "SECURE" 1967 BORDERS OF ISRAEL.

14. IN SHORT, THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF NICOLSON'S DIPLOMACY OF PRECISION. IT IS THE POLICY OF IMPRECISION, OF UNDERSTANDING EVERYBODY AND DISAGREEING ALL THE WAY WITH NOBODY, OF INTERVENING IN THE ISRAEL-ARAB STRUGGLE BUT INSISTING THAT WASHINGTON'S STUDIED COMPROMISES ARE MERELY "SUGGESTIONS" THAT BOTH SIDES MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER.

15. MR. CARTER'S ASSUMPTION IS THAT ISRAEL AND THE ARABS WOULD NEVER AGREE TO A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT BY THEMSELVES, AND THAT HE MUST INTERVENE WHILE PRETENDING THAT HE WAS JUST TOSSING A FEW VAGUE IDEAS. HE CLEARLY PREFERS THE POLICY OF IMPRECISION TO NICOLSON'S PRINCIPLE OF PRECISION, AND HE MAY BE RIGHT. BUT IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE RESOLUTION OF THIS CONFLICT OF

IDEAS IS CLEAR. CHRISTOPHER

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